



NASSAU-SUFFOLK SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION, INC.

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TO: Long Island State Senate and Assembly Delegations

FROM: Susan Bergtraum, President
Martin Kaye, Legislation Chairperson

RE: Governor Spitzer's proposal to expand charter school cap

The Senate and Assembly withstood the pressure from the former Governor to raise the cap on the establishment of new charter schools in New York State. We urge you to resist any attempts by Governor Spitzer to do the same.

The Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association is confident we are supported by Long Island voters in our long-standing resistance to the imposition of charter schools into local school districts. We represent communities that rally in opposition at every attempt by the state that would grant automatic access to local tax dollars by for-profit business enterprises that operate outside of the control of any publicly elected body.

Regrettably, these voters had no say in the State's decision that opened the drawer of the public till. Neither did the taxpayers of Riverhead who, despite their overwhelming vote in opposition (2,411 to 908) are now sending their tax dollars to a state-mandated charter school.

The official position of N-SSBA's member boards states: "As written, New York's charter school legislation threatens the fiscal stability of suburban districts and may undermine public support for school budgets that would be forced to forward education dollars to for-profit companies that are not held directly accountable to the voters". The New York State School Boards Association states: "Charter schools have no direct accountability to school districts or to local taxpayers. The current process for authorizing new charter schools inflicts 'taxation without representation' on local communities".

On behalf of its 108 member boards, the Nassau-Suffolk School Boards Association urges that you not compound the difficulties presented by New York's ill-conceived charter school legislation. Reject any expansion of charter schools. Insist that charter applications have the approval of the publicly elected local school board. Provide additional state funding to districts with established charter schools. Change the current charter school funding formula that awards full K-12 funding to charters that limit enrollment to less costly elementary grades. Subject charter schools to the same percentage limits on spending increases imposed under a contingency budget. Provide districts with a mechanism to immediately recover charter payments if registered students either do not attend the charter school or return to the district. Hold charter schools to the same standards and accountability as traditional locally supported public schools and evaluate these schools annually.

cc: Governor Eliot Spitzer
Senate Majority Leader Joseph L. Bruno
Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver
School Board Presidents and Superintendents
Nassau and Suffolk Region PTAs